Head Start Professional Development and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) - Webcast

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

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Pat Brown: Welcome to the Office of Head Start's webcast: "Head Start Professional Development and the CLASS." I'm Pat Brown, acting director of the Office of Head Start. Today's webcast is an overview of an observational instrument, developed by researchers at the University of Virginia, which measures and assesses the quality of what is happening in preschool classrooms.

As many of you know, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 requires that the Office of Head Start include in the monitoring reviews of Head Start agencies, a valid and reliable research-based observational instrument that assesses classroom quality, including the assessment of multiple dimensions of teacher-child interactions that are linked to positive child outcomes and later achievement.

The conference report accompanying the act also suggests that the Office of Head Start consider using existing research-based methods such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, also known as the CLASS, for this purpose. We are very excited to learn how this tool can best serve the Head Start community, particularly because of its link to professional development. the CLASS is an instrument that can be easily used to provide teachers with direct feedback about their actual classroom practices.

It also can be used as a training tool for teachers by providing them with a framework for understanding the components of their teaching that really matters for students. Most importantly, it helps to create a common language and common objectives between teachers and support staff, so that teachers are able to see improvements in their teaching that are directly associated with more positive social and academic development for students.

I know that many of you are concerned about how the CLASS will be used for monitoring, but we are still in the very early stages of evaluating the CLASS for that purpose. To be quite honest, at this point, we simply don't know. Still, we want to create a process that is positive and transparent, beginning by introducing you to CLASS and by sharing the things we do know right now. We also want to make it very clear that no program is required to use the CLASS.

Today's webcast is an opportunity for everyone to learn how the instrument works, and to explore some of the ways it can be used by programs in professional development and quality improvement efforts. Still, it underscores our firm belief that all grantees should have a system in place that provides teachers with observation, feedback, and training on teacher-child interactions.

While it may appear that changes are often made, the overall goal at Head Start remains the same. We want to provide high-quality programs to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families every day, in ways that reflect the Program Performance Standards and also address the varied needs of individual families. I know how hard you work every day to make a difference in the lives of Head Start children and their families and I want to thank you for that.

Now I'm going to turn things over to Colleen Rathgeb for more about today's webcast. Colleen Rathgeb: Thank you, Pat, and thanks to everyone in our viewing audience for joining us. We are glad that you have taken the time to be with us today. My name is Colleen Rathgeb and I'm a senior analyst at the Office of Head Start and the moderator for today's discussion.

Joining us today are several very special guests. Bob Pianta is the Dean of the Curry School of Education and Director of the Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia. He is also co-developer of the CLASS. He will provide us with an in-depth look at the research that helped develop the CLASS and he will give us detailed information on the CLASS tool.

Amanda Bryans is the director of the Educational Development and Partnerships division at the Office of Head Start. Amanda will talk with us about the variety of ways the CLASS can be used for professional development in Head Start. Damï¿½n Manning is a technical assistance specialist in Region III. He is a CLASS trainer and he's here today to share his experiences with the regional trainings currently being offered.

Ann Linehan is the director of the Quality Assurance division at the Office of Head Start. Ann will offer her insight into how the CLASS may be used as part of ongoing program monitoring efforts in the future and will share the Office of Head Start's plans for the CLASS pilot in the 2009 fiscal year.

And, last but certainly not least, Gayle Cunningham is the executive director of the Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity in Birmingham, Alabama. Gayle is planning to introduce the CLASS training tool to her sites for use in professional development activities and will share with you her reasons for being excited about this new tool.

Welcome Bob, Amanda, Damï¿½n, Ann, and Gayle. Today's webcast will include a short break and then a live Q and A session. This is your opportunity to ask questions about the content we are covering today by simply typing your question into the Q and A field on the right side of your browser. There will also be "on-demand" archive of this webcast, including answers to the questions we don't have time for this afternoon that will be posted on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, or the ECLKC.

We also encourage you to send any additional feedback or suggestions you have to the e-mail address you see on your screen now: OHSwebcast@esi-dc.com. Now, to get started Amanda Bryans is going to share with us the purpose for today's webcast. Amanda?

Amanda Bryans: Thank you, Colleen. Before I discuss the purpose of today's webcast, I want to candidly share my optimism regarding the CLASS. As we began thinking about this tool as it relates to monitoring, we became really excited about the potential it also has for professional development.

Over the years in Head Start we have had a tendency to emphasize the importance of 'things' we see in the classroom environment, but we've always known we can't ignore the importance of also looking at what the children are actually experiencing. While things like the curriculum, the room arrangement, and the resources remain very important, our job now is to restore balance, focusing just as much on the teacher-child relationship, as we do on the environment.

We know that one of the reasons relationships are so important is because people are most receptive to new ideas when they are introduced through interactions with other people. The value in those interactions is magnified when children are placed in environments that are also rich with information and materials. Since the real fuel for learning is not ignited in the environment, it is sparked in the context of relationships.

In Head Start we've always encouraged a child's social, emotional and physical development, as well as his or her cognitive or academic progress. One of the fundamental components of our program encourages teacher sensitivity toward children. This can be observed at any Head Start classroom around the country.

Warm smiles greet children as they start their day, children's individual interests and ideas are acknowledged and built upon, and teachers are expected to individualize instruction in response to each child's strengths and needs. In the past, this component of a Head Start classroom has not always been easy to document or assess, but it is the very thing that a tool like the CLASS helps us look at.

By zeroing in on the quality of teacher-child interactions in a classroom, the CLASS, in conjunction with other instruments, provides a holistic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of Head Start's education services. Most importantly it provides a mechanism to deliver valuable feedback to teachers that can help them improve interactions with the children they serve, to better support each child's progress.

As Pat said earlier, because a tool like this is so essential to ensuring the quality of teacher-child interactions, we believe that all grantees should have a process in place that provides teachers with systematic observation, feedback,

and training. That is why we're here today. The purpose of this webcast is to inform Head Start directors of the Office of Head Start's emphasis on the importance of observing teacher-child interactions as a source of continuous quality improvement.

We want to familiarize you with the CLASS, share the opportunities for training and professional development, discuss the monitoring pilot, and answer any questions you might have. Now, if you're taking notes, get your pen and notepad ready because we will be turning the conversation over to Bob Pianta who is going to give us an overview of the CLASS.

If you don't have your pen and notepad handy, don't panic, or if you miss something later as the webcast continues, don't panic. This webcast will be available on the ECLKC, and we are going to also provide material -- resource material on the ECLKC, that will give you much of the information -- in writing -- you will be hearing about today. Bob?

Bob Pianta: thank you, Amanda. Before we begin talking about the classroom assessment scoring system, or the CLASS, I'd like for you to take a moment to think about the best classroom you have ever visited. What qualities did you notice about the teacher, the classroom, and the students? Maybe you saw classrooms divided into interest areas, organized around specific kinds of play, like: block area, small toy area, book area, sand-and-water area, and art area.

In one of those classrooms, in the book area, I'm sure you watched as a small child reached for a book about the alphabet located on a miniature bookshelf built just for her height! On the wall you may have noticed a daily routine posted, and throughout the day you observed as the children followed the schedule with certainty, going from small- and large-group times to lunch time, then off to nap time. In this case, your attention was being drawn to elements of structural quality.

Structural quality looks at what is being taught, who is doing the teaching, and where the teaching is happening. In the same setting, you may have also observed the teacher responding immediately to a student's need for help. Or you may have been impressed by the teacher's cool and easy demeanor while she kept the daily activities flowing so the children remained engaged throughout the day.

One moment really may have grabbed your attention. You would have observed a child on the verge of a tantrum return slowly back to more controlled behavior after the calm, positive, and reassuring words that were spoken to her by the teacher. Those types of interactions speak to process quality. Process quality looks at how teachers and children interact with one another.

It is important that we make this distinction early on between structural quality and process quality, because the CLASS measures process quality. Process quality looks beyond the physical attributes of the environment: the things that are on the wall, or the schedules, and the resources that teachers use, to observe the interactions that teachers are having with children, because it is these social interacts that we know are most closely linked to students' academic and social development and growth.

Structural quality certainly matters, but research now shows us that the effects of structural quality on children's learning are mediated by, or flow through, process quality. In other words, although it is important to work with a high quality curriculum, that curriculum will only be as valuable as the teacher's implementation of it through her interactions with children.

Students who are exposed to good curricula that are well implemented show those kind of positive gains in learning, but those who are exposed to poor implementation of even the best curricula are as oftentimes unlikely to make progress. This is why it's so important to look beyond structural quality to examine how teachers are interacting with their students -- so that we can ultimately provide teachers with feedback that helps them improve and move toward higher quality interactions with children.

Gayle, do you want to talk a little bit about the difference between structure and process quality in Head Start in your program? Gayle Cunningham: Thanks, Bob, I'd love to. What we are really talking about here is the where, what and

how of teaching. The environment is where we teach and the curriculum is what we teach.

Our classrooms across Head Start score very well on measures that examine environmental quality, especially in comparison with most other programs for young children. We also have learned a lot about curricula and have made good choices of curricula for our programs. Research confirms that Head Start programs have made great strides in the area of structural quality. Where we teach, or the environment, and what we teach, or the curricula, are both structural quality.

We have also used a variety of methods to work on the how of teaching, or the process quality within our classrooms. At my program in Birmingham, we have education specialists who coach, mentor, and support teachers. Across the nation Head Start teachers also participate in various trainings, classes, workshops, credentializing activities. They work on degrees. They have pre-service and in-service staff development activities, all of which help us to improve the how of teaching.

The how teachers teach children and thereby improve their outcomes. Colleen: Thanks, Gayle. So, Bob, now that we know the CLASS is an instrument that measures the nature and quality of teacher-child interactions, can you tell us more about what that means?

Bob: Sure. If you think about the classroom environment, quite often there are at least two or more things occuring in what appears to be one single event. classrooms are incredibly complex and dynamic places. So the question is, what do we observe? And how does the lens that we use to observe classrooms affect what we see? If the lens we use leads us to look for problems, we'll find problems, but if the lens we use sees positive things, then we'll tend to emphasize the positive.

So, the lens we use is very important. The CLASS helps us structure our observations to provide a common lens for observing in classrooms. It also provides us with a common language to discuss what we see so that all observers look for dimensions of interactions as identified by the CLASS. The CLASS focuses on three broad domains of the interactions that teachers have with children and support their outcomes: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

Within these domains, there are ten distinct dimensions of teacher-child interaction that capture different aspects of emotional support,structural support, or organization. And within those dimensions, there are several indicators, that include multiple behavioral markers that define each of those indicators.

Let's talk about emotional support. This is the first broad area of classroom quality the CLASS addresses and consists of the dimensions of teacher-child interaction that are related to the emotional tone experienced by the children in a classroom. There are four dimensions of classroom quality measured within the emotional support domain. I'll give you definitions for each dimension, and Amanda, Damï¿½n and Colleen will provide you with examples of what this might look like in a Head Start classroom.

Let's start with the first dimension within emotional support which is "positive climate". Positive climate reflects the overall positive emotional tone of the classroom and the connection among teachers and students. A classroom that has a positive climate is a fun place to be! We often see smiles in the classroom, and the teacher seems to enjoy being with the children. The teacher listens respectfully to the children, and probably joins in their play.

The second dimension of teacher-child interaction within emotional support is "negative climate", and this assesses the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom, including that of the teacher and the students. Damï¿½n, can you describe positive and negative climate for me?

Damï¿½n: Sure. I think when we think about just the title itself, positive climate, we think of these very exciting and happy, and the energy is really high. So when we're in those environments we see things like the shared laughter, the shared aspects, closeness of proximity of the teacher and the children. And so those are some of the things that are probably very obvious that we look for and that the CLASS also looks for as well. Some of the other things that we see in those environments may be a little more subtle.

When we actually put our hands around the child and support them physically in that way we may see hugs in certain environments, but we also may see children stopping and listening to one another as they begin to answer a question and things of that nature. It's just a variety of different things. Some that are a little more obvious, like I said, in terms of the laughter and the excitement, but then those other things about that warmness and closeness and things of that nature as well.

With negative environment, however, we automatically may think well then it's the absence of a positive environment, but not necessarily so. What we look for in class is, we are looking for that expressed negativity, so there we may see things like anger, hostility, those type of frustrations, but even things like sarcasm -- or even disrespect, which are a little more subtle.

To give an example you may have a child that's working on an art activity and they may break or rip down a page that they're working on and they bring it to the teacher's attention saying, "Look, I ripped my art project," and to which the teacher says, "Oh, well."

Something of that nature may fly right by us might and may say that's such a small and short example, but it could be something that really has an impact upon the child and also other children are looking at that and it can have an impact upon how they actually interact with one another. Bob: Thanks, Damï¿½n. I think of those examples you described as conveying messages to the child about how safe the teacher is to approach as a person in the classroom and how important that is for a kid's learning.

The third dimension in emotional support is teacher sensitivity and this refers to the awareness of and responsiveness to the students' academic, social, and emotional needs. The sensitive teacher serves as a secure base for students, provides them with supports they need to actively engage in and explore learning in the classroom. And finally, the fourth dimension of teacher-child interaction within this broad area of emotional support is what we call regard for students' perspectives.

This dimension captures the degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and the classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view. Amanda, can you give us examples for teacher sensitivity and regard for student perspectives?

Amanda: Sure, Bob. Thank you. My head is always full of stories about children and I like any opportunity to tell them. I think one of the stories that I wanted to tell you is about a little girl that I know named Layla who comes to school one morning not her usual, bubbly self. She doesn't bound into the classroom and loudly and exuberantly say "Hello," like she usually does.

She walks in, her head's kind of down, she seems generally nonplussed about the world and the teacher notices, greets her warmly and gently, and their day begins. Later the teacher finds Layla during work time and goes to her in the housekeeping area and sits down next to her and just talks with her, and as they're together, Layla begins to talk about the big change in her home which is that there's a new baby.

The teacher knew there was a new baby but she let Layla talk kind of about what was happening for her and really, they did some playing with some dolls and talking. It wasn't the next day that Layla returned to her usual bouncy self, but over the next couple of weeks she did. That teacher continued to offer a kind of extra support and make sure that she had individual time with Layla every day.

My story kind of about regard for child or student perspective has to do with a little boy named Roberto. He came in his classroom one morning clutching a book and Roberto did not talk a whole lot at school, but his teacher looked at his face and saw that he looked very excited and a little, kind of proud. And she said to him immediately, "Roberto, it looks like you have something very important with you today" and he held up his book and it was a book about construction vehicles.

And he was well-known to love everything with four or more wheels. She said, "That is very special. I'm wondering if

today if it would be all right with you if I read this book to all the children later when we have group time."

Roberto nodded his head and was clear again that he was proud to be bringing his special thing to school today and his teacher recognized it and was able to include it and use his idea, kind of, in her plan for the day even though she hadn't had a book about construction vehicles listed on her lesson plan. I think those are the examples I would like to offer.

Bob: Those are terrific, Amanda. I think how what you said and what Damï¿½n conveyed is that the overall sense of the classroom as an inviting, emotional environment, in which the teacher's interactions with children are inviting the teacher toward her, both in the general way, like positive climate, and then in a very specific way so every individual child in that classroom feels known, you know. I think that's what sensitivity is really about.

What I'd invite viewers to do now is to take a look at a video that captures interactions between teachers and their students, and the video conveys many aspects of these dimensions we have described within this broad domain of emotional support. Let's take a look at the video and try to watch for the kind of behaviors we have described, and we'll talk a moment afterward to talk about what we see.

[Video begins] Teacher: Very nice. Okay. If you're name is picked, we're going to take turns listening to your friends. You do a super-duper job listening to Mrs. Bryant and Mrs. Tish. Now it's going to be your turns to be the teacher. If I choose your name, and I'm going to pretend that I'm picking Mrs. Tish, then you have to all listen to that person and that person will tell us how to move. Okay?

Students: Okay. Teacher: Okay. I'm going to pretend to pick Mrs. Tish. Mrs. Tish: move like a penguin.

Teacher: That's different, isn't it? Okay. Let's pick another name that was good listening. Were you guys laughing and screaming when you did that? No, that was good so you could hear the next name. Who is this? Student: Mia.

Teacher: Mia. Look at Mia and listen. Mia: slither like a snake. Teacher: Slither like a snake? Wow. Good one. Slither back to your spot. Mrs. Tish: Snakes are slow. Teacher: They're slow, but I hear you guys. You sound like snakes. It looks like a snake pit. All right. I'm picking another name.

Student: I did it this way. Student: Erica. Teacher: Erica. Listen. Erica: I want to jump up and down. Teacher: Jump up and down. Wow, nice listening to your friends. All right, here's another name. Who is this?

Students: Arianna. Teacher: Arianna. Everyone look at Arianna. Take your fingers out of your mouth, sweetie, so everyone can hear you. Arianna: Fly like a bird.

Teacher: Fly like a bird. You guys are so intelligent, you're thinking of all these smart things to do. My goodness. That was a good idea. Erica, move to the side and Mia, move to the side so they don't hit anybody. Very smart. Ready? Here's another one. Students: Isaiah. Teacher: Look at Isaiah.

Isaiah: Move like a frog. Teacher: A frog! Students: Ribbit, ribbit... [Video ends]

Bob: One of the things that stands out for me in watching that video is the dimension of regard for student perspectives I think is really embodied in that. So within the context of an activity that's kind of structured, the kids are standing on their spots, this teacher allows and really gives the kids permission to move around physically, to wiggle like a snake, to jump like a frog, things that kids want to do when they are four years old and they're having to stand for a little while.

So there's a real way in which she invites them to have a real role in that in a way that sometimes can be hard for teachers to let that degree of permission to go. The other thing that I was struck by while I watched this is that every child is called by name so that every time a child's referred to, they are referred to by name.

Each child is asked in a sense to participate as an individual in that activity which allows for plenty of room -- in a

couple cases the teacher did it and another teacher might even expand on it, to do the kinds of things that Amanda was talking about, which is to invite the connection of the child's personal experience into the classroom. I think the other thing that is very clear in this is the overall emotional tone of this activity is just positive.

The tone of the teacher's voice is extraordinarily positive, and even there was one time where one of the children, the boy, was migrating off the square, and all the -- I think the teacher's assistant just did was bring him back with a little gentle move of her hand in a way that just provided the kind of support that allowed him to come right back in. A great example of sensitive interaction right there. I think that in many ways that video really embodies all those elements very, very well.

Now let's shift from emotional support and talk about the second broad area of teacher-child interaction that the CLASS looks at and this is classroom organization. A lot of times people think about classroom organization as something that isn't embodied in teachers' interactions with children.

But, what I want to call attention to as we describe this are the ways in which how teachers interact with kids conveys a sense of organization that helps kids regulate their own behavior and get most of the learning out of the day while they maintain some interesting activities.

Children who are engaged in meaningful activities are far more likely to be involved in the kind of appropriate learning behaviors than kids who are provided with uninteresting activities that may end up behaving somewhat inappropriately and then need to escalate into some behavior management. The first dimension we are going to talk about within the classroom is what we call behavior management, but let me make the point that we're really talking about effective behavior management.

Effective behavior management measures the teacher's ability to effectively prevent and redirect misbehavior. While it's important that teachers learn how to consistently and effectively respond to inappropriate behavior, one of the most important aspects of effective behavior management is that teachers are proactive. They respond to behavior before it escalates.

Research indicates that children who attend well-managed classrooms are far more likely to achieve than children who attend poorly-managed classrooms. The second dimension of interaction within classroom organization is productivity. This assesses how well a teachers' manage instructional time and routines so that children have opportunities to learn. A highly productive classroom functions something like a "well-oiled machine". Everybody knows exactly what to do.

If you were an outside observer you would have a hard time imagining how any more instructional time, or really learning time, could be squeezed into the day. The quality of instruction is not something we are looking at when we look at productivity. So, it's possible to observe a classroom in which the children move from one questionable activity to another, but the classroom would be rated as being highly productive because the instructional time and routines are well managed. There's not a lot of waiting around.

The third and final dimension within classroom organization is what we call instructional learning formats. This focuses on what the teacher does during the lesson or when she provides activities, centers and materials that maximize students' engagement and learning ability. It doesn't just look at the types of activities or the kinds of materials used in the activities, but how the teacher, through her interactions, facilitates the way those activities can allow children to learn and draw them into it as a learning experience.

Damï¿½n, Can you share some examples of behavior management, productivity and instructional learning formats for us? Damï¿½n: Sure, Bob. With behavior management some of the things that you may see is actually stating objectives in the positive, or directions in a positive for young children. So you may see a teacher may actually say, "Use walking feet" as you transition over into your work time, versus, "Don't run."

Or you may actually see other examples. one that comes to mind for example is when -- I just thought about -- for example, when this comes to you actually positive behavior management. And a child -- a teacher actually points out to, that a child is actually -- they may say, "Look how Jason is helping us clean up by putting away our blocks." Those

types of directions and stuff are stated in the positive and not necessarily what not to do, don't do this or what have you.

Those are the things once again that are helping children really, like I said before, actually self-regulate in their environment. When it comes to productivity, that part there is this well choreographed experience that happens for children. Say for story time, what you may see is the teacher's already ready on the carpet area, he flicks the lights, the children know to stop and they begin their transition over to the carpet. The book is ready, the teacher is ready.

They read the book and then there's actual other experiences, such as that the book is about animals, the children are -- they may already -- while they're engaged in the activity, they're able to act out the different animal sounds or hop and jump like a frog. That's one of the characters in the actual book. Finally, with instructional learning formats, just along with that story, you may have not only some variety of materials but that the children are actually engaged the whole time.

Sometimes we can get really caught up on having a lot of things available for young children, but it's actually, "What are we doing with them?", those actual materials. One other example as well as, say in the, if there's root time or table time, so to speak with young children. If the materials are already ready. The teacher doesn't have to say transition over to the table. They want to have an art project. "Oh, where's my paint, where's my glue? I'll be right back."

Therefore we're maximizing the time because the materials are already ready and available to the children. Ultimately, with this classroom organization, it's not necessarily about having a lot of materials ready for the children. It's not necessarily about keeping children busy so that they don't have the opportunity to actually misbehave, so to speak, but it's this very well proactive thought process that happens so that children are really drawn into the learning process.

Bob: Perfect. I think you're describing exactly how those three elements fit together to create this sense of a planned, organized environment when you think about a four-year-old and how important it is for what they're learning developmentally in terms of self-control to be in an environment that in a sense models that, that it's predictable, that there are routines, you can expect things to happen.

And even the ways in which talking about something like productivity and instructional learning for us, the kids are getting something interesting to do and they're not having to wait, then what you're doing is preventing the opportunity for the kind of behavior that oftentimes you have to spend a lot of time redirecting. So let's now take a look at another video clip and see what this teacher does in her classroom that embodies these elements of classroom organization.

[Video begins] Students: Freeze. Teacher: Thank you, friends. It is time for us to clean up and put everything away so we can go outside. Louise, freeze please. Make sure everything is put away in the right place. Okay? And then you may get your jackets and come on the red line. Okay, Tiza. [Singing] Clean up, clean up. [Video ends]

Bob: Okay. So what we see there is very brief clip, but we get an idea of the way in which that environment is predictable for the kids. The teacher has a set of signals that she's worked out with the kids. The kids understand what those signals mean.

The signals queue a set of behaviors that help manage a transition that oftentimes, and having watched a lot of classrooms, the teacher will say something while the kids are kind of noisy and she'll give a direction and the kids won't hear it, and then before we know it there's a lot of hubbub and we lose that time. This is a transition that happened very, very quickly, the kids understood what it was they were supposed to do, and it was very, very well managed.

There is some teaching that goes into teaching kids how to use a transition like this. And you saw that very clearly in the kids' responses to the teacher. But once that teaching is done, you can see the kind of benefits for how organized the classroom is and then you can move on and on through a day without there being lots of loss of time and children's' engagement and the kids had sort of... seemed like they had kind of a fun time doing that, too.

Now, let's look for a moment at the final broad domain of classroom quality described by the CLASS. Here we're

talking about the interactions that teachers have with kids that provide instructional support. These dimensions examine strategies that teachers use to promote children's' higher order thinking skills and language development. We're also going to focus on how teachers use feedback to help children learn. The first dimension within instructional support is concept development.

This aspect measures teachers' use of instructional discussion and activities that promote students higher order thinking skills and cognition. Teachers who ask children questions such as, "How do you know that?" Or "What do you think would happen if?" are helping children develop their higher order thinking skills. The second dimension of teacher-child interaction within instructional support is quality of feedback.

This dimension assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning opportunities, encourages children to understand what they are learning, and provides kids with specific information about their effort and their performance.

Feedback is different from concept development in that concept development is a method that the teacher may use when delivering instruction, whereas quality of feedback is something we observe usually in response to a question a child may have or as a child moves through a particular activity. And the third and final dimension within instructional support is what we call language modeling.

Language modeling captures the quality and amount of teachers' use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques during their interactions with students that extend their oral vocabulary and their oral language skills. In a classroom with high-quality language modeling there is a lot of conversation, or back-and-forth exchanges, between the teacher and the children.

These conversations expose the children to a wide range of vocabulary and give them practice with social communicative exchanges. Amanda, can you give us an example of concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling? Amanda: Sure, Bob. I think with regard to concept development, what we think about is teachers really helping children to scaffold, to kind of think about experiences they've had before.

Teachers are very aware of where each child is developmentally, and is able to provide kind of the next experience to challenge that child and let them move a little bit further on whatever that continuum they're on is. I think with regard quality of feedback, one thing I think about, and this is -- many Head Start programs have sort of wrestled with the issue of praise and whether you should praise children or shouldn't praise children. Lots of people pass out "100 ways to Praise" to parents.

Some programs have decided that praising is sort of empty and undermines kids' intrinsic motivation. I think what's important is that you can stop worrying about that argument and think about quality of feedback, which is how do you support children, how do you recognize children in a way that helps them be willing to kind of to take the risk of going to the next step?

So acknowledging, watching the child, acknowledging where the child is and being able to use that as an opportunity to, again, kind of extend them into the next thing. Your feedback is going to further excite the child in the area of learning that they're working on. With regard to language modeling, what I really think about is a lot of the information we've collected from Head Start classrooms over the years.

We have been, of course, doing monitoring for a long time. We have many, many narrative observations that are that our Head Start reviewers have recorded. And we've read a lot of those. We also have a lot of kind of research evidence that supports this idea that many, I think we've taught well the idea that you should ask open-ended questions. Very frequently in Head Start class rooms, you hear a teacher ask a child or children open-ended question. But what we see is often that is two-turns.

The teacher asks an open-ended question, the child answers it and that is the end of the conversation. Many times children themselves signal interest in going further in that conversation. One of the things we're really looking for I think with language modeling is more protracted conversations, discussions, multiple turns between teachers and

children as an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary and to think about things like other ideas that might be the same or just to take it to the next step with regard to language.

It isn't enough to see on every subject the teacher has a turn, the child has a turn. Even two turns each is often not enough. So those are kind of the things I thought of, and Colleen, do you want to add to that at all? Colleen: Well, one of the things when we're talking about concept development was also how we connect what we're talking about in the classroom with other experiences the children have recently had or experiences in the real world.

So maybe if you're -- you know, you're reading a snowy day you talk about other kinds of weather that you had been talking about in the classroom or talk about what you do at home with the snow or what they've done. So you can bring both other concepts that you've done in the classroom, but also connect the things to the real world for the children.

Bob: Um-hmm. I think these are great examples. In many ways, I think of the instructional support elements as indicating the degree to which -- if you think of a child's mind as a little bit -- as a muscle that needs to grow, these are the stretching exercises, you know. It's the way in which a teacher stretches a child's thinking.

You know, where when a child performs an activity, they don't just get an answer of right or wrong on that activity, but they're invited by what the teacher says to the child to think more deeply about it or perform it in a more complicated way, and when you think about how these kinds of activities that stretch a child's mind rest on how the child feels toward the teacher...

... then you can start seeing the connection between the emotional support that we just talked about a little while ago and how the kinds of elements of instructional support are adding value to that for children's learning. So let's take a little while now and watch a teacher how she -- in another video clip, how she provides instructional support for her kids in these interactions that she's having with them. So let's take a look.

[Video begins] Teacher: Yeah. Let's -- I found some numbers, some number tiles. Let's see. Child: This is number seven. Teacher: That's seven? Okay, can you find number seven here? Wow. Now, you're going to put it right there. Good for you. Yeah, it can go in there. Okay. Can do next one. Would you like to count? [inaudible]

Teacher: How do you know that? Count and find out. Let me see. Wow. Almost finished. You have one count done. Almost. The beautiful caterpillar. Right? No, the hungry caterpillar. Child: Seven. Teacher: It's seven? Oh, I missed it when you were counting. Let's count it again. Let me see.

Child: one, two, three, four, five, six, eight. Teacher: Are you sure that there's eight in there? Let's count them. Count and show me. Child and Teacher: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

Teacher: You were right the first time. See if we can find another seven. Find another number seven. Wow. You find seven. Seven bananas. Are they the same. Are they matching? Well let's count this again and find out. I'm not sure if there are seven. Count those and find out. Child: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Teacher: Good job. Okay.

Child: one, two, three, four, five, six, eight. Teacher: How many? Child: Eight. Teacher: Well, are you going to find the number eight? Okay. [Video ends]

Bob: Well, that was an incredibly rich set of interactions we saw there with the teacher. I was reminded how great teachers are like orchestra conductors. This teacher's doing a wonderful job with this young child around the counting exercise, and then sort of leans around and is able to give great comments and scaffolding support to the kids that were behind her.

I think in the interactions with a child around the counting activity, a couple things you saw there were you almost saw no circumstances in which there was just like a right or wrong, correct or incorrect type of comment that the teacher gave that kind of high-fived. That was about it. What you saw were an extended set of questions that provided the supports and the cues to the child in the questions to look for what was next in the learning that needed to occur.

So the teacher structured the activities in such a way so that the kid's counting could progress in a more sophisticated way without the teacher showing the kid what to do. And I think that's really the key element here is that the teacher questioned and left things open in a way that drew the child's attention to the things that the child needed to attend to but didn't perform the task for the child.

And so the child again gets that kind of exercise of that cognitive muscle while she's actually having an activity that she's enjoying. So it was a terrific example of that kind of higher elements of instructional support. So as you can see, the CLASS is an instrument that addresses many of the aspects of what teachers do that are important for kids.

It helps teachers be more intentional in their interactions with children in ways that are developmentally appropriate and it uses consistent language so that programs and teachers can move more systematically toward positive environments for children.

Colleen: Bob, can you talk about the research that was used to develop the CLASS? Bob: Sure. the CLASS was developed at the University of Virginia based on an extensive literature review as well as a variety of scales that were used in the NICHD study of early childcare and youth development when we observe in childcare settings.

And we also paid a lot of attention to the literature on parenting as well, and the dimensions of parent-child interactions because many of those were the same. These dimensions that we looked at were derived from this review of observational instruments that were used in childcare, parenting and school research, as well as the literature on effective teaching practices. We also conducted extensive focus groups and piloting before we went into the field.

The CLASS was designed primarily to create a common process and a common vocabulary that could be used to describe aspects of quality of interactions across the early childhood and actually even into the elementary grades so that we would have the same dimensions of teacher-child interaction applied to those different grades. We know that interactions between teachers and kids matter whether it's in pre-k or in third grade.

I want to emphasize that even though we created this to observe settings at a variety of different grade levels, we really started with the tool at the pre-k level and the kind of descriptions of classrooms that are going to be used in the implementation and Head Start are imbedded in pre-k classrooms.

Colleen: Thanks. Damï¿½n, one of the great things about the CLASS tool is that it is reliable and valid. Can you explain what that means and tell us why it's so important? Damï¿½n: Sure, Colleen. Reliability is an essential characteristic of a good observation tool, because if the tool doesn't measure things consistently, or reliably, then you can't assume that the scores are an accurate reflection of the actual classroom processes.

For example, two people using a reliable tool for observation will come to the same conclusions. However, the same two people may come to very different conclusions if they are simply sent into a classroom to observe without the framework of a reliable tool that provides a common measure on what quality is. Validity is essential because it means that we are measuring something about classrooms that actually matters.

We could easily have a measure that provides reliable scores on things we don't care about at all but this measure wouldn't be valid in relation to student achievement. Colleen: Thanks, Damï¿½n. Bob, so far, what have we learned from the CLASS?

Bob: Well, we've used the CLASS in thousands of classrooms right now. I think we know a little bit about how it works. What we're seeing is that children in classrooms that offer higher levels of emotional support and classroom organization are showing gains. So the learning that occurs in those classrooms are greater in expressive language skills and they're showing better social adjustment over the course of the year.

We also see that children in classrooms offering higher instructional support are making greater gains in language development, vocabulary, literacy, and in their math skills. So the CLASS has been helpful in providing evidence of the specific types of classroom integrations that seem to really make a difference for kids. We think that the more

teachers know how they behave in the classroom, the better their chances are for improving those interactions on a daily basis.

Colleen: Thanks, Bob. Now that we understand how the CLASS is designed, Amanda is going to share with us a little about how the CLASS can be used for professional development. Amanda?

Amanda: Thanks again, Colleen. Bob's opening comments made me think of my own 3-year-old daughter who I am totally in love with. While I obviously want her to have the very best things at her disposal, if I had two choices: the first being a classroom with a very resource-rich physical environment, but a distant or very cold teacher, or the second, a totally empty room with a caring teacher who supported her interests, understood her humor and imagination and attended to her well-being...

... I would choose the second option without a second thought. I believe that even in an empty classroom, having a teacher who is caring and engaged would allow her little mind the opportunity to blossom. Of course we want both things for children. The majority of early childhood teachers care greatly about the young children that they serve. Some, however, have developed interaction patterns or skills that are not supportive of optimal child outcomes.

The CLASS can assist teachers and their mentors or coaches with ways to identify strengths and weaknesses in their interactions. This process of observation, recording, analysis, and feedback is a powerful mechanism for change and continuous improvement.

In addition to professional development, the CLASS can also be used as a training tool for pre-service teachers by providing them with a framework for understanding the components of their teaching that really matter for children, as well as a mechanism for providing systematic feedback and support throughout their training and early careers. It may be used to provide teachers with direct feedback about their actual classroom practices, by observing them at regular intervals during the school year.

Using the CLASS in this way allows teachers to get feedback about the dimensions of their teaching that are associated with more positive social and academic development for children. In addition, teachers are given a more concrete and objective measure of their areas of strength and weakness, as well as areas for... their improvements over the course of a year or more.

The CLASS can also serve as the basis for new models of in-service training that break away from the traditional workshop model by focusing on providing teachers with ongoing, flexible, individualized, and collaborative support to improve their interactions with children.

I believe that the CLASS has enormous potential for improving quality of programs if we can help teachers understand just how important their interactions with children are and then, over time provide them with the training and support they need to improve those interactions. We hope that after your staff returns from the CLASS training you will spend time with them analyzing your current process or measuring the quality of teacher-child interactions.

Talk about the method you are presently using for teacher observations and evaluate how well you are able to identify and describe the teacher's behaviors. Feedback is invaluable to teachers. Also discuss the process you use for professional development, and think about what tool you are using to measure system-wide strengths and weaknesses.

Even if you decide that CLASS is not the instrument you want to use, please begin to think about what other systems or tools you will put in place to provide regular observation and feedback. Now I'm going to turn things back over to Colleen to discuss the purpose of the CLASS training. Colleen?

Colleen: Thanks. The purpose of the CLASS training that we have begun is to familiarize grantees with the CLASS tool; to reinforce the importance of observation of teachers; to enhance staff skills related to objective observation; to link teacher observation to professional development; develop a common language about teacher-child interactions; and to give your staff the opportunity to become a reliable class assessor.

This fall we began regionally based trainings for Head Start programs on the CLASS instrument and professional development that will continue through the summer of 2009. Programs are not required to participate in these trainings; however, all the costs, including travel for at least one staff member from every Head Start grantee and delegate agency, will be covered by the Office of Head Start. When we first began talking about the CLASS training, a lot of directors expressed interest in attending themselves.

We recognize that if we are to be successful using teacher-child observation to improve classroom quality, we need the leadership of Head Start directors. But we also determined that it probably would not be the best use of director's time to go through three days of this training. This webcast articulates some of the opportunities the CLASS offers for Head Start and the director's critical role in realizing these benefits.

One of the important things we need directors to do is designate the appropriate participants for the CLASS training. So please send your education specialist, your staff developer, mentor-coach or whatever title it is the staff who oversees and ensures professional development and teacher training in your program. The regional trainings will be three full days and will give participants the capacity to use the CLASS instrument to assess and improve classroom quality in their programs.

The first two days of trainings will be on the CLASS instrument itself with each participant working to become a reliable class assessor, and we'll talk a little bit more about what that means in a minute. The third day will focus on how participants can use the CLASS tool in professional development.

We've given you a basic idea of the format of the trainings, but I'd like to ask Damï¿½n Manning, who's one of our trainers, to go into a little more detail about what a participant in one of the regional CLASS trainings will actually experience. Damï¿½n?

Damï¿½n: Thanks, Colleen. The CLASS training provides participants with the opportunity to really become immersed in the tool. Participants are given a copy of the CLASS manual, which describes the characteristics of all domains, dimensions, and indicators in great detail. In some ways, the training process is similar to the discussion we had towards the beginning of the webcast.

For each of the 10 dimensions, we first take participants through the definition, then we have them watch a video that illustrates the behaviors associated with that dimension. The next step in the process is to guide participants through a series of exercises that helps them become familiar with the observation process. For instance, one exercise has participants categorize behaviors they see into the appropriate domain.

One of the final components of the training challenges participants to bring together all of the knowledge they have gained about the CLASS tool. In this exercise, participants work together as a group to go through a simulation of a typical CLASS observation cycle, which a typical cycle consists of a 20-minute period during which the observer watches classroom interactions and takes notes about the elements relevant to the CLASS dimensions.

During this time, observers should watch the who, what, and how of everything that happens in the classroom, with particular attention to the teacher-child interactions. Following the 20-minute cycle is a 10-minute period for recording codes, which means assigning ratings that range from low to high. Now that you probably have had a better understanding of the mechanics of the training itself, I would like to talk for a minute about what it really is like to use the CLASS tool.

The CLASS challenges the traditional way of thinking about assessment. It requires you to abandon any preconceived notions that you may have about what constitutes a high quality teacher and/or classroom environment. To use the CLASS effectively, you must rely solely on the instrument to make your judgments based on the specific teacher-child interactions you observe.

This makes becoming a reliable class assessor one of the most difficult parts of the training. Achieving reliability demonstrates you can consistently use the tool across multiple classrooms and score objectively, but our experience teaches us that not everyone who participates will become a reliable assessor after they complete the first two days of

training.

Even if a participant doesn't test reliable at the training, the concepts they learn from the CLASS are still incredibly useful, particularly for professional development. If they are interested in working further towards reliability, extra support is available through the University of Virginia.

Colleen: Thanks, Damï¿½n. As we mentioned earlier, the Office of Head Start will pilot the CLASS as part of monitoring in a sample of grantees in 2009. My colleague, Ann Linehan, has been working tirelessly around this effort, and she's here to share the progress that has been made so far. Ann?

Ann: Thanks, Colleen. This year we have a great opportunity to pilot the CLASS as part of our triennial on-site monitoring reviews. The purpose of the pilot is to help the Office of Head Start assess how the CLASS could be integrated into our current monitoring review process and meet the requirements of reauthorization. We know that implementing the CLASS in every review in 2010 is a huge undertaking and that it will require careful planning.

We have identified fifty grantees scheduled to be monitored in the second and early part of the third quarter of this fiscal year to participate in the pilot. We have made these selections based solely, and I'd like to repeat, solely, on ensuring that the pilot included a diverse body of Head Start grantees with regard to their program type, size, and location.

The Office of Head Start will be communicating shortly with those grantees that have been selected. In fact, we will be asking Head Start directors of the 50 selected grantees to help us identify the actual classrooms for the pilot study. The results of the CLASS pilot will not be part of, or impact, grantees' monitoring findings or the official report. The Office of Head Start is discussing how best to provide feedback to grantees after the review.

We know that grantees will want this feedback; however it is important to note, and we cannot underscore this enough, that we will not be able to draw any conclusions about the grantee's overall classroom environments based on this pilot. Our hope for this pilot is to gain insight and knowledge about creating a plan for implementation in 2010. This is an exercise that will give us information about how we incorporate the CLASS as part of an onsite review and the time it takes for it to be administered.

We also want to learn more about how our current compliance questions and the protocol and the areas the CLASS addresses interface with each other. And I've heard many comments here today, that everything you're talking about, I keep thinking, "Well, there's a Performance Standard that relates to that." Last week I got a call and was asked, "When are things going to settle down in the Office of Head Start? When are you going to stop changing monitoring?"

This is a question I frequently hear and it made me think about all the changes that have occurred in the monitoring system over the last several years. In 2006, we were charged with centralizing the monitoring system. As part of that change there were several cultural shifts that we had to make together. These changes have brought us to a better place today, a place that is centered on transparency, consistency, and objectivity.

As a result, we are far more prepared to accommodate the requirements of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act than we were two years ago, but of course there is always room for additional improvement. Our current observational tool in the monitoring protocol is not standardized. This opens the door to multiple interpretations from the reviewers who are conducting classroom observations.

Using a tool like class gives us an opportunity to impose more structure on the educational section of the monitoring process in a clear and open way. It provides everyone with a common language. So, for example, if we are talking about a positive or negative classroom climate we will all know the specific indicators that we documented to help us reach our conclusion. The Office of Head Start is required to conduct, as you know, approximately 530 triennial reviews a year, and as I said earlier, this is a massive undertaking.

To accomplish this goal we must do whatever it takes to build and sustain a reliable, consistent, and transparent monitoring system that can effectively identify areas needing correction or improvement, as well as to document areas

of strength. We believe that incorporating the use of the CLASS tool in our monitoring system will help us achieve our goals. As we move forward with the CLASS pilot, some programs may feel pressure to prepare to be assessed in this new way.

I think of the Bobby McFerrin song, "Please do not worry, be happy." It is not necessary to prepare, and actually, it's not really possible. If the results of the CLASS assessment documents strengths in a particular classroom, it is likely that those strengths developed over a period of time. Similarly, if the results showed that the classroom environment needed some improvements, it's unlikely that significant improvements can be made quickly.

The Office of Head Start will continue our efforts to be completely open about this process and we will keep you updated on the future implications of the pilot. Once we have developed an implementation plan for 2010, we will schedule additional webcasts and/or other presentations that will explain the process.

Colleen: Thank you, Ann. There is one more perspective we'd like to add to today's conversation. Gayle Cunningham is an amazing director who leads a program that includes 20 centers in Birmingham, Alabama. Gayle, will you share with us your thoughts about using the CLASS in your programs? Gayle: Of course, Colleen. Thank you.

I'm very excited to be here to talk about the CLASS. I've been a Head Start director for most of 22 years, and supporting and developing good teachers is a very important issue to me, so I was quite pleased when I learned that Head Start would be moving forward to make the CLASS available to programs.

I lead a program that serves 1,600 children, give or take a few, in 20 centers and I'm looking forward to using the CLASS for staff development in the education service area -- we still call it a component -- of my program. I first learned about the CLASS over a year ago when I attended a conference session led by Bob Pianta. I was intrigued by the techniques the CLASS uses and also the positive outcomes resulting from use of the CLASS.

It defines aspects of teaching in ways that are very helpful to those who support teachers. The instrument is also able to describe teacher behaviors in ways that allow someone observing to make effective judgments about behaviors or which interactions are positive, and which are less than positive in regard to effective teaching.

This instrument has delineated behaviors in a very detailed way so that a staff developer, a mentor, a coach, an education specialist, or someone else working with a teacher, can observe and provide feedback in a way that I've never seen before. A teacher who is using this instrument and thinking about their own teaching can be helped to learn which of their behaviors are most effective and which are less effective for, and in some cases detrimental to, children's learning.

In my program, I have education specialists who are assigned to each of our eight clusters that serve the needs of 20 centers. My goal for using the CLASS is to have these staff learn to use the tool and then use it in both formal and informal ways with teachers as they work in classrooms. I really hope that all programs will take advantage of the regional trainings being offered.

I realize there are some programs that may feel they do not have the staffing to send someone to yet another training, but the CLASS is not just another assessment. It is an observation and feedback process that really can improve teacher quality if it is implemented properly over time. I also think it is important to take a minute to talk about the relationship between the person who is observing and the person who is teaching.

I think it is most effective for this to be a mentorship rather than a supervisory relationship. Having a person who is only there to help a teacher, as opposed to a person whose primary function is to make recommendations about their tenure or their pay, makes a difference in how open a teacher might be. It's important that there is a trusting relationship so that the teacher can ask questions and seek help in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

All teachers need coaching, conversation and reflective relationships with someone who can help them think critically about their teaching. This is so important to improving and maintaining overall teacher quality. Head Start programs have the capacity to make big changes fairly quickly. For instance, programs across the nation have made dramatic and

important changes in response to findings from faces. We've also made great improvements based on recommendations regarding curriculum.

I hope that incorporating a tool like the CLASS into our programs can be another one of those changes because I think this instrument gives the people who help teachers a new kind of assistance and education to improve and provide feedback that can make a difference and have a lasting impact.

Colleen: Gayle, thank you so much for sharing your perspective with us today. now, We're going to take a short break and when we come back we're going to turn things over to our audience for a live Q and A session. We'll see you back here in two minutes.

Welcome back. Now that you've had a few minutes, what questions do you have for us? We're going to take our first question from Jackie, who asked a question about monitoring. So, Ann, the question is, "Who on our review would be the one to do the CLASS? Would it be the E.C.D. person?"

Ann: well, that's a good question. Yes, it will be the ed reviewer. We are currently -- we have selected a subset from our reviewer pool of education reviewers, and we are going to provide, as you know, the CLASS training for them very shortly, so we would be assured that anyone out doing the pilot with us is a reliable -- has reached a reliability percentage that needed to be considered reliable reviewer.

Colleen: Okay. We have another question on monitoring from Julie in Illinois. And that is, "How will we know if we are one of the sites for the pilot?" Ann: Okay. We talked about the pilot will be in the second and early part of the third quarter. So the second quarter begins January 1. Folks will be receiving written communication from us very shortly that they will be one of the sites selected...

Colleen: Okay. Ann: ...one of the lucky sites. Colleen: One of the lucky sites. that's right. We had a question related to reliability. Since that had just come up, the question was, whether -- it sounded like there would be a test at the training. I'm going to ask Damï¿½n to talk a little bit about how the reliability assessment works in that training.

Damï¿½n: Sure. The reliability actually is divided -- the participants will watch three different reliability segments. And they're scored in the cycles as we talked about earlier. You watch a 20-minute cycle, you watch a 20-minute segment and then you actually score for 10 minutes. So that's the process.

You score it based upon what you've learned in terms of how to use the actual scoring sheet, and then the presenters -- the facilitators of the training actually score it based upon a calculation that is compared to the master coder, who are the individuals who have watched the video and come up with a score they feel best matches the level of the different dimensions.

Colleen: Again, this isn't in any way kind of a testament to people's early childhood understanding or their kind of broader ability to work in classrooms. It is simply, "Are you able to consistently use this tool in the way that it was developed to be used?" So as we said, everyone will not come back as a reliable assessor from that training and that is fine.

We want to kind of ease some of the anxiety that people have about that, that kind of test or assessment, that it is just a way to see, "Are you consistent on this tool the way it was developed?" Anything to add to that?

Ann: Colleen, I just have a question -- when you say not everyone will come back, and we understand that because some of our own colleagues came back and were not reliable. But is it a one-shot deal? Do you have an opportunity to come back and do it again?

Colleen: it is not a one-shot deal. At the training, you will have this assessment. If people are interested in becoming -- trying to become reliable again, they can go to U.VA. and there's another reliability segment they can look at and work with the folks there to do that. We also think over the course of the next year and longer, we may look at doing some sessions connected to state Head Start associations or other meetings where there will be opportunities for people to

look at reliabilities.

We'll be examining those kind of things in the future. Gayle: It might be useful also to talk about the difference between becoming reliable and being able to train others to use the instrument.

Bob: Yeah. Let me talk a little bit about that, because I think part of what we're talking about here when we talk about reliability, during the whole webcast up to this point we've talked about the importance of a consistent use of a common lens and a common language. So that when I go into a room, I'm watching interaction and I'm pulling out the same kinds of things as Damï¿½n might pull out and we're putting it in the same place along the range of one to seven.

That's really what we're talking about here with reliability. So that consistency is really important. So there's some stage in which an observer would want to get to the stage of using the scale for those points. As Gayle pointed out, you may want to get to the stage where you could train other people to be reliable.

So there's an additional amount of training that we've been very successful at being able to demonstrate that people go through another two-day training to be able to become trainers of people to use the instrument reliably. So there's two stages to this that we're delighted to be able help whatever, however, how many ever, and whoever folks are interested in doing those.

Colleen: And just because that is a question that has come up at the first trainings that we have started, we do want to make sure it's clear that the three-day trainings that we are offering to grantees that have just begun is not a "training of trainers". It is training people to become reliable class assessors and training them to how to think about how they can use that tool in the professional development with their own teachers.

They could certainly come back to programs and give other teachers or other education staff training about what the CLASS is, some understanding of the dimensions. But they wouldn't be able to with those three days of training make someone -- train someone else to reliability as an assessor.

As Bob said, there are tools available through the University of Virginia to add on additional days of training if you are interested in going to a fuller scale in your program and training those folks to be trainers. Damï¿½n, one more question, one more thing, and then we'll go on --

Damï¿½n: I just to really drive the point home that because you're early childhood professionals with a wealth of experiences in working and observing young children and interactions between teachers using a variety of different instruments and tools, that if you should not become reliable the first time, what that does mean is more so that you need an additional focusing of the lens, not that it's calling to question your background, your experience, your expertise in early childhood.

That's what this process really is about. It's Continuing to refine that lens as CLASS. Colleen: We've got two questions: one from Elvira in new Mexico and one from Charles in Alaska that both ask about how the CLASS is different from other assessment instruments, particularly if something like the CLASS and the ECERS can work together and how they're different. Bob?

Bob: I think in a lot of ways, I think of the CLASS as kind of standing on the shoulders of the ECERS and the ELLCO as well, both of which are used in Head Start and early childhood classrooms. And one of the great things about early childhood education is that we're comfortable with a notion of a classroom setting being observed.

We have a lot of experience with this sort of thing already. What the CLASS does that's distinctive from the ELLCO and the ECERS is really only look at interactions between teachers and children. So we really aren't paying attention to the properties of the physical environment in which those interactions occur, the presence of a curriculum or activities and we're not only focused on activities of a certain type or sort in terms of interactions.

We're looking at very broad domains, the kinds of things that can operate across all kinds of areas of learning that we want to occur. But the main issue is just interactions. Colleen: Right. Okay. And now a question from Evelyn in

Georgia for Amanda. She asked whether the CLASS will be aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework.

Amanda: I love that question. You know that the Child Outcomes Framework really outlines the areas of child development that we think are critically important in terms of programs being aware of each area and making sure that they're assessing children across all the domains of the framework and that they're kind of tracking children's progress to ensure that each child is continuing to develop along a trajectory in each domain.

I think one of the reasons that we have found that Head Start teachers and staff have been so receptive to the CLASS is 'cause it's really consistent with Head Start's sort of educational, philosophical underpinnings. We have always, always thought about comprehensive child development and we used to talk about things like social confidence and the relationship of social confidence and school readiness.

I think there's a whole field of emerging research that's talking about this area called executive function, which is a lot about children's ability to self-regulate and do some of the higher order thinking things. So we sort of through our regulations and through the outcomes framework -- the domain of social and emotional development, kind of espoused this philosophy that says relationships are so important and children -- that we need to individualize for children.

So I think that the outcomes framework is already aligned and that when you start learning about -- the more you learn about the CLASS the more you recognize elements of Head Start's underpinnings. Again, we have this common vocabulary. We can get some kind of certainty that when people are looking into the classroom, they're comparing oranges to oranges.

Colleen: We've got a question from Valerie for Bob, and that is a question about whether the CLASS has been used and looked at in its development among different cultures, and we've also received similar questions about its use in bilingual and multilingual classrooms, so if you could talk to that a bit?

Bob: Sure. It's an extraordinarily important question given that the number of children entering early childhood programs from so many different language backgrounds and cultural backgrounds. The CLASS itself was developed and still is used in many, many classrooms and programs that reflect a very broad range of cultural and economic and language -- ethnic background.

We've been very careful to pay attention to the degree to which the findings that I talked about earlier -- the reliability of the CLASS and the validity -- that is, whether if one measures a classroom that has a certain cultural and ethnic makeup in it, do high scores mean the same thing in terms of the amount of the learning that might go on in that classroom as opposed to one that might have a different cultural background.

We've been very careful to pay attention to those things and we find very consistent results: that high scores matter for kids in the same way across classrooms in which the cultural and language backgrounds of the kids may be very, very different from one other or may be very homogenous in terms of differing from standard English.

Now, the question here, a different question, or a take on this question is also whether the CLASS itself has been translated into other languages so it might be used and applied to classrooms in which the language being spoken might be Spanish, for example, in that particular classroom. We're not there yet.

Okay? We're just starting to talk about a set of sort of bridging features that might be used to be able to translate some of the behavioral indicators and markers so that someone might be able to make a leap in applying the ideas to classrooms in which the interaction is in a language other than English. But, We're not there yet. We're working on this right now. I think we'll have a set of tools available for classrooms in which those features apply that could be useful to teachers and observers in those settings.

Colleen: Great. Thank you. We've got an easy question that I can take from Susan in Wisconsin about the number of staff that can attend the training, so for programs that serve up to 500 children, delegates or grantee, they can send one. If you serve more than 500, you can send two staff, more than 1,000, three, and more than 2,000, four.

And we know this is obviously not going to train everyone that would need to do this to implement class full scale, but we, again, wanted to get every grantee and delegate the opportunity to have some staff trained to see if it's something they're interested in pursuing. I'm going to put Bob back on the hot seat a little bit again for the next question was whether or not we, if the CLASS can be applied to infant and toddler classrooms.

Bob: we get this question a lot. I think probably many viewers know that the dimensions of interaction that we're talking about in terms of adults and children and teachers and children certainly apply to two-year-olds and 18-month-olds and one-year-olds.

We are right now having the feel that a version of the CLASS that is applicable to those age ranges and the interactions between teachers and children in those age ranges was requiring, is kind of a translation of the behavioral indicators to interactions between teachers and infants and toddlers. So we have that in the field. I'm thinking that over the course of the next several months we'll be ready to be able to make that available as well.

Ann: Colleen, then I have a question. For those that are signing up for the training, and you talked about how many could go from a particular program, would it not be the best use of someone's time if they were an Early Head Start mentor or Ed Coordinator at this point? Colleen: It's a preschool program that we're talking about.

Amanda: But we will get to our Early Head Start programs, and the message, this message that we're delivering today about the importance of systematic teacher-child interaction observation and feedback stands. We'll get to you with more training. Don't in the meantime wait for us before thinking about how you're going to implement that kind of system in your program.

Colleen: Right. We have a question that, Gayle, I'll let you speak to first. The CLASS seems very time intensive. A program concerned about the fact that their budget has not been increased in quite a while, and they now only have one person who's responsible for the ongoing supervision of all their teachers. And so they are not sure that it's realistic for them to be able to do something like that. From a programs perspective do you want to respond at all?

Gayle: Yes, I have several responses. One, I think that one ed coordinator, ed manager would benefit greatly from this training and from having this trained eye. Also, I would hope that the program would find other ways to provide this one-on-one observation for their teachers. Perhaps they have created a cadre of teacher mentors or mentor teachers who are also teaching but acting as mentors for other teachers. We have about 10 of those in our program. They could be trained.

Perhaps the program is small, but there are other small programs nearby and they could collaborate, partner, and hire someone who could work with all their programs, providing these observations and giving feedback to their teachers.

Colleen: Great. Ann, there's a question on monitoring that said, it seems to -- to this grantee, that there are things in the CLASS that aren't currently part of the Performance Standards. They're wondering how we could use it in monitoring. Or would you be holding them accountable for things that weren't part of the Performance Standards?

Ann: if there are things that class is looking at that are not currently part of -- I mean, we need to be clear. This year, the pilot, and the administering of the CLASS instrument is totally separate and apart from what the monitoring results are going to be. One of the things is, we're really trying to learn from the pilot this year the answer to that question, because we think that some things do interface or crosswalk very nicely.

And then we want to figure out for those things that don't, what do we, the Office of Head Start need to do, because if they really matter, and they really do indicate -- relate to classroom quality, then we want to figure out how we can use that for program improvement.

I mean, I think there's some legal issues there that we need to deal with, but it's like, I don't have the answers -- we don't have the answers now, but it's something that we know we have to work through this year. I'm not sure if that's the complete answer, but that's where we are at this stage.

Amanda: I think that's also an opportunity to think about that we are still going to be evaluating or monitoring programs in terms of the environment, the physical environment, the structural kind of features, so class will become part of what we do, and then we will have other parts of the protocol.

As Ann mentioned earlier, during her comments, we're doing a very thoughtful crosswalking of what we're getting from CLASS, how it looks with regard to our Performance Standards, and then what else do we have in the protocol and how that measures other things so that we'll have a comprehensive instrument for looking at Head Start classrooms by 2010 when we go to scale.

Ann: Colleen, the thing I would offer this person asking this question, if there are things that they say, we don't think this connects at all. If that e-mail address is available to people, we would be curious to see where people think there are disconnects that would help us in our own learning and understanding as we gear up for 2010. Colleen: Great. Damï¿½n, and then we're going to take our last question.

Damï¿½n: I was just thinking, one of the things people have come back with feedback we've received from the actual trainings and people saying how this could actually be used in their programs, related to the aspect of professional development and having actual data to use, it's one thing to say, for example, which was what class gives us is actual language or indicators is, "I've done a behavior management training for my staff", but then we would say, "What exactly has been the content?"

Those types of things that class provides us or will provide you with those specific things to even put in your own trainings or when you consult with someone and they come in, you can say, "Well, these are the specific areas."

Instructional learning formats, productivity, these are the things we really want you to focus on. That's with all the different areas. I think it adds that level of quality that we're that looking for, and that's how it matches with Re-authorization and the requirements related to professional development.

Colleen: Great. Our last question is going to be from Deidra right here in the district of Columbia. she ask if we can get a packet or manual of information about this sent to us. We will be having this webcast archived on the ECLKC and we will also in the near future be providing more information, written materials and other professional development information through the ECLKC that people will be able to access.

So stay tuned and keep watching the ECLKC. So, those are all the questions that we have time for today. Please remember, if you have questions in the future we still can be reached at the address you see on the screen: ohswebcast@esi-dc.com. So if you think of something later today or tomorrow that you want to ask, please feel free to e-mail us.

Answers to the questions that we didn't have time for today will be posted on the ECLKC website, along with an "on-demand" archive of this webcast and other materials. As we come to the close, I'd like to thank everyone who joined us in the studio: Pat, Bob, Amanda, Damï¿½n, Ann, and Gayle. And thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to be with us as well. Amanda, you want to wrap us up?

Amanda: Thanks, Colleen. in many ways I feel that we are standing on the precipice of a transformative moment in Head Start. With an assessment tool like the CLASS, we've found a missing piece of the puzzle that we've been looking for, for a very long time.

A tool that helps assess the quality of teacher-child interactions can help strengthen the quality of our programs by focusing on something we know is so important to a young child's life and development, supportive relationships built on quality interactions. Now it is up to you and your local programs to make the difference. As program leaders, we charge you to take this information and lead your staff in what can become a remarkable systematic improvement process.

It is efforts such as these that keep Head Start on the forefront of early childhood education and ensure that we meet the incredible charge with which we have been entrusted. Thank you again for joining us today. Keep in touch.

Goodbye.
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